

## BOOK VI: THE PURSUIT IN THE FOREST

RUPERT'S JOURNAL—Continued. July 3, 1907.

There is no anodyne but work to pain of the heart; and my pain is all of the heart. I sometimes feel that it is rather hard that with so much to make me happy I cannot know happiness. How can I be happy when my wife, whom I fondly love, and who I know loves me, is suffering in horror and loneliness of a kind which is almost beyond human belief? However, what is my loss is my country's gain, for the Land of the Blue Mountains is my country now, despite the fact that I am still a loyal subject of good King Edward. Uncle Roger took care of that when he said I should have the consent of the Privy Council before I might be naturalized anywhere else.

When I got home yesterday morning I naturally could not sleep. The events of the night and the bitter disappointment that followed my exciting joy made such a thing impossible. When I drew the curtain over the window, the reflection of the sunrise was just beginning to tinge the high-sailing clouds in front of me. I laid down and tried to rest, but without avail. However, I schooled myself to lie still, and at last, if I did not sleep, was at least quiescent.

Disturbed by a gentle tap at the door, I sprang up at once and threw on a dressing gown. Outside, when I opened the door, was Aunt Janet. She was holding a lighted candle in her hand, for though it was getting light in the open, the passages were still dark. When she saw me she seemed to breathe more freely, and asked if she might come in.

Whilst she sat on the edge of my bed, in her old-time way, she said in a hushed voice:

“Oh, laddie, laddie, I trust yer burden is no too heavy to bear.”

“My burden! What on earth do you mean, Aunt Janet?” I said in reply. I did not wish to commit myself by a definite answer, for it was evident that she had been dreaming or Second Sighting again. She replied with the grim seriousness usual to her when she touched on occult matters:

“I saw your hairt bleeding, laddie. I kent it was yours, though how I kent it I don't know. It lay on a stone floor in the dark, save for a dim blue light such as corpse-lights are. On it was placed a great book, and close around were scattered many strange things, amongst them two crowns o' flowers—the one bound wi' silver, the other wi' gold. There was also a golden cup, like a chalice, o'erturned. The red wine trickled from it an' mingled wi' yer hairt's bluid; for on the great book was some vast dim weight wrapped up in black, and on it stepped in turn many men all swathed in black. An' as the weight of each came on it the bluid gushed out afresh. And oh, yer puir hairt, my laddie, was quick and leaping, so that at every beat it raised the black-clad weight! An' yet that was not all, for hard by stood a tall imperial shape o' a woman, all arrayed in white, wi' a great veil o' finest lace worn o'er a shroud. An' she was whiter than the snow, an' fairer than the morn for beauty; though a dark woman she was, wi' hair like the raven, an' eyes black as the sea at nicht, an' there was stars in them. An' at each beat o' yer puir bleeding hairt she wrung her white hands, an' the manin' o' her sweet voice rent my hairt in twain. Oh, laddie, laddie! what does it mean?”

I managed to murmur: “I'm sure I don't know, Aunt Janet. I suppose it was all a dream!”

“A dream it was, my dear. A dream or a veesion, whilka matters nane, for a' such are warnin's sent frae God . . .” Suddenly she said in a different voice:

“Laddie, hae ye been fause to any lassie? I'm no blamin' ye. For ye men are different frae us women, an' yer regard on recht and wrang differs from oors. But oh, laddie, a woman's tears fa' heavy when her hairt is for sair wi' the yieldin' to fause words. 'Tis a heavy burden for ony man

to carry wi' him as he goes, an' may well cause pain to ithers that he fain would spare." She stopped, and in dead silence waited for me to speak. I thought it would be best to set her poor loving heart at rest, and as I could not divulge my special secret, spoke in general terms:

"Aunt Janet, I am a man, and have led a man's life, such as it is. But I can tell you, who have always loved me and taught me to be true, that in all the world there is no woman who must weep for any falsity of mine. If close there be any who, sleeping or waking, in dreams or visions or in reality, weeps because of me, it is surely not for my doing, but because of something outside me. It may be that her heart is sore because I must suffer, as all men must in some degree; but she does not weep for or through any act of mine."

She sighed happily at my assurance, and looked up through her tears, for she was much moved; and after tenderly kissing my forehead and blessing me, stole away. She was more sweet and tender than I have words to say, and the only regret that I have in all that is gone is that I have not been able to bring my wife to her, and let her share in the love she has for me. But that, too, will come, please God!

In the morning I sent a message to Rooke at Otranto, instructing him by code to bring the yacht to Vissarion in the coming night.

All day I spent in going about amongst the mountaineers, drilling them and looking after their arms. I COULD not stay still. My only chance of peace was to work, my only chance of sleep to tire myself out. Unhappily, I am very strong, so even when I came home at dark I was quite fresh. However, I found a cable message from Rooke that the yacht would arrive at midnight.

There was no need to summon the mountaineers, as the men in the Castle would be sufficient to make preparations for the yacht's coming.

#### LATER.

The yacht has come. At half-past eleven the lookout signalled that a steamer without lights was creeping in towards the Creek. I ran out to the Flagstaff, and saw her steal in like a ghost. She is painted a steely blue-grey, and it is almost impossible to see her at any distance. She certainly goes wonderfully. Although there was not enough throb from the engines to mar the absolute stillness, she came on at a fine speed, and within a few minutes was close to the boom. I had only time to run down to give orders to draw back the boom when she glided in and stopped dead at the harbour wall. Rooke steered her himself, and he says he never was on a boat that so well or so quickly answered her helm. She is certainly a beauty, and so far as I can see at night perfect in every detail. I promise myself a few pleasant hours over her in the daylight. The men seem a splendid lot.

But I do not feel sleepy; I despair of sleep to-night. But work demands that I be fit for whatever may come, and so I shall try to sleep—to rest, at any rate.

#### RUPERT'S JOURNAL.—Continued. July 4, 1907.

I was up with the first ray of sunrise, so by the time I had my bath and was dressed there was ample light. I went down to the dock at once, and spent the morning looking over the vessel, which fully justifies Rooke's enthusiasm about her. She is built on lovely lines, and I can quite understand that she is enormously fast. Her armour I can only take on the specifications, but her armament is really wonderful. And there are not only all the very newest devices of aggressive warfare—indeed, she has the newest up-to-date torpedoes and torpedo-guns—but also the old-

fashioned rocket-tubes, which in certain occasions are so useful. She has electric guns and the latest Massillon water-guns, and Reinhardt electro-pneumatic “deliverers” for pyroxiline shells. She is even equipped with war-balloons easy of expansion, and with compressible Kitson aeroplanes. I don’t suppose that there is anything quite like her in the world.

The crew are worthy of her. I can’t imagine where Rooke picked up such a splendid lot of men. They are nearly all man-of-war-men; of various nationalities, but mostly British. All young men—the oldest of them hasn’t got into the forties—and, so far as I can learn, all experts of one kind or another in some special subject of warfare. It will go hard with me, but I shall keep them together.

How I got through the rest of the day I know not. I tried hard not to create any domestic trouble by my manner, lest Aunt Janet should, after her lurid dream or vision of last night, attach some new importance to it. I think I succeeded, for she did not, so far as I could tell, take any special notice of me. We parted as usual at half-past ten, and I came here and made this entry in my journal. I am more restless than ever to-night, and no wonder. I would give anything to be able to pay a visit to St. Sava’s, and see my wife again—if it were only sleeping in her tomb. But I dare not do even that, lest she should come to see me here, and I should miss her. So I have done what I can. The glass door to the Terrace is open, so that she can enter at once if she comes. The fire is lit, and the room is warm. There is food ready in case she should care for it. I have plenty of light in the room, so that through the aperture where I have not fully drawn the curtain there may be light to guide her.

Oh, how the time drags! The clock has struck midnight. One, two! Thank goodness, it will shortly be dawn, and the activity of the day may begin! Work may again prove, in a way, to be an anodyne. In the meantime I must write on, lest despair overwhelm me.

Once during the night I thought I heard a footstep outside. I rushed to the window and looked out, but there was nothing to see, no sound to hear. That was a little after one o’clock. I feared to go outside, lest that should alarm her; so I came back to my table. I could not write, but I sat as if writing for a while. But I could not stand it, so rose and walked about the room. As I walked I felt that my Lady—it gives me a pang every time I remember that I do not know even her name—was not quite so far away from me. It made my heart beat to think that it might mean that she was coming to me. Could not I as well as Aunt Janet have a little Second Sight! I went towards the window, and, standing behind the curtain, listened. Far away I thought I heard a cry, and ran out on the Terrace; but there was no sound to be heard, and no sign of any living thing anywhere; so I took it for granted that it was the cry of some night bird, and came back to my room, and wrote at my journal till I was calm. I think my nerves must be getting out of order, when every sound of the night seems to have a special meaning for me.

#### RUPERT’S JOURNAL—Continued. July 7, 1907

When the grey of the morning came, I gave up hope of my wife appearing, and made up my mind that, so soon as I could get away without exciting Aunt Janet’s attention, I would go to St. Sava’s. I always eat a good breakfast, and did I forgo it altogether, it would be sure to excite her curiosity—a thing I do not wish at present. As there was still time to wait, I lay down on my bed as I was, and—such is the way of Fate—shortly fell asleep.

I was awakened by a terrific clattering at my door. When I opened it I found a little group of servants, very apologetic at awaking me without instructions. The chief of them explained that a young priest had come from the Vladika with a message so urgent that he insisted on seeing me

immediately at all hazards. I came out at once, and found him in the hall of the Castle, standing before the great fire, which was always lit in the early morning. He had a letter in his hand, but before giving it to me he said:

“I am sent by the Vladika, who pressed on me that I was not to lose a single instant in seeing you; that time is of golden price—nay, beyond price. This letter, amongst other things, vouches for me. A terrible misfortune has occurred. The daughter of our leader has disappeared during last night—the same, he commanded me to remind you, that he spoke of at the meeting when he would not let the mountaineers fire their guns. No sign of her can be found, and it is believed that she has been carried off by the emissaries of the Sultan of Turkey, who once before brought our nations to the verge of war by demanding her as a wife. I was also to say that the Vladika Plamenac would have come himself, but that it was necessary that he should at once consult with the Archbishop, Stevan Paleologue, as to what step is best to take in this dire calamity. He has sent out a search-party under the Archimandrite of Spazac, Petrof Vlastimir, who is to come on here with any news he can get, as you have command of the signalling, and can best spread the news. He knows that you, Gospodar, are in your great heart one of our compatriots, and that you have already proved your friendship by many efforts to strengthen our hands for war. And as a great compatriot, he calls on you to aid us in our need.” He then handed me the letter, and stood by respectfully whilst I broke the seal and read it. It was written in great haste, and signed by the Vladika.

“Come with us now in our nation’s peril. Help us to rescue what we most adore, and henceforth we shall hold you in our hearts. You shall learn how the men of the Blue Mountains can love faith and valour. Come!”

This was a task indeed—a duty worthy of any man. It thrilled me to the core to know that the men of the Blue Mountains had called on me in their dire need. It woke all the fighting instinct of my Viking forbears, and I vowed in my heart that they should be satisfied with my work. I called to me the corps of signallers who were in the house, and led them to the Castle roof, taking with me the young messenger-priest.

“Come with me,” I said to him, “and see how I answer the Vladika’s command.”

The National flag was run up—the established signal that the nation was in need. Instantly on every summit near and far was seen the flutter of an answering flag. Quickly followed the signal that commanded the call to arms.

One by one I gave the signallers orders in quick succession, for the plan of search unfolded itself to me as I went on. The arms of the semaphore whirled in a way that made the young priest stare. One by one, as they took their orders, the signallers seemed to catch fire. Instinctively they understood the plan, and worked like demigods. They knew that so widespread a movement had its best chance in rapidity and in unity of action.

From the forest which lay in sight of the Castle came a wild cheering, which seemed to interpret the former stillness of the hills. It was good to feel that those who saw the signals—types of many—were ready. I saw the look of expectation on the face of the messenger-priest, and rejoiced at the glow that came as I turned to him to speak. Of course, he wanted to know something of what was going on. I saw the flashing of my own eyes reflected in his as I spoke:

“Tell the Vladika that within a minute of his message being read the Land of the Blue Mountains was awake. The mountaineers are already marching, and before the sun is high there will be a line of guards within hail of each other round the whole frontier—from Angusa to Ilsin; from Ilsin to Bajana; from Bajana to Ispazar; from Ispazar to Volok; from Volok to Tatra; from Tatra to Domitan; from Domitan to Gravaja; and from Gravaja back to Angusa. The line is

double. The old men keep guard on the line, and the young men advance. These will close in at the advancing line, so that nothing can escape them. They will cover mountain-top and forest depth, and will close in finally on the Castle here, which they can behold from afar. My own yacht is here, and will sweep the coast from end to end. It is the fastest boat afloat, and armed against a squadron. Here will all signals come. In an hour where we stand will be a signal bureau, where trained eyes will watch night and day till the lost one has been found and the outrage has been avenged. The robbers are even now within a ring of steel, and cannot escape."

The young priest, all on fire, sprang on the battlements and shouted to the crowd, which was massing round the Castle in the gardens far below. The forest was giving up its units till they seemed like the nucleus of an army. The men cheered lustily, till the sound swung high up to us like the roaring of a winter sea. With bared heads they were crying:

"God and the Blue Mountains! God and the Blue Mountains!"

I ran down to them as quickly as I could, and began to issue their instructions. Within a time to be computed by minutes the whole number, organized by sections, had started to scour the neighbouring mountains. At first they had only understood the call to arms for general safety. But when they learned that the daughter of a chief had been captured, they simply went mad. From something which the messenger first said, but which I could not catch or did not understand, the blow seemed to have for them some sort of personal significance which wrought them to a frenzy.

When the bulk of the men had disappeared, I took with me a few of my own men and several of the mountaineers whom I had asked to remain, and together we went to the hidden ravine which I knew. We found the place empty; but there were unmistakable signs that a party of men had been encamped there for several days. Some of our men, who were skilled in woodcraft and in signs generally, agreed that there must have been some twenty of them. As they could not find any trail either coming to or going from the place, they came to the conclusion that they must have come separately from different directions and gathered there, and that they must have departed in something of the same mysterious way.

However, this was, at any rate, some sort of a beginning, and the men separated, having agreed amongst themselves to make a wide cast round the place in the search for tracks. Whoever should find a trail was to follow with at least one comrade, and when there was any definite news, it was to be signalled to the Castle.

I myself returned at once, and set the signallers to work to spread amongst our own people such news as we had.

When presently such discoveries as had been made were signalled with flags to the Castle, it was found that the marauders had, in their flight, followed a strangely zigzag course. It was evident that, in trying to baffle pursuit, they had tried to avoid places which they thought might be dangerous to them. This may have been simply a method to disconcert pursuit. If so, it was, in a measure, excellent, for none of those immediately following could possibly tell in what direction they were heading. It was only when we worked the course on the great map in the signaller's room (which was the old guard room of the Castle) that we could get an inkling of the general direction of their flight. This gave added trouble to the pursuit; for the men who followed, being ignorant of their general intent, could not ever take chance to head them off, but had to be ready to follow in any or every direction. In this manner the pursuit was altogether a stern chase, and therefore bound to be a long one.

As at present we could not do anything till the intended route was more marked, I left the signalling corps to the task of receiving and giving information to the moving bands, so that, if

occasion served, they might head off the marauders. I myself took Rooke, as captain of the yacht, and swept out of the creek. We ran up north to Dalairi, then down south to Olesso, and came back to Vissarion. We saw nothing suspicious except, far off to the extreme southward, one warship which flew no flag. Rooke, however, who seemed to know ships by instinct, said she was a Turk; so on our return we signalled along the whole shore to watch her. Rooke held The Lady—which was the name I had given the armoured yacht—in readiness to dart out in case anything suspicious was reported. He was not to stand on any ceremony, but if necessary to attack. We did not intend to lose a point in this desperate struggle which we had undertaken. We had placed in different likely spots a couple of our own men to look after the signalling.

When I got back I found that the route of the fugitives, who had now joined into one party, had been definitely ascertained. They had gone south, but manifestly taking alarm from the advancing line of guards, had headed up again to the north-east, where the country was broader and the mountains wilder and less inhabited.

Forthwith, leaving the signalling altogether in the hands of the fighting priests, I took a small chosen band of the mountaineers of our own district, and made, with all the speed we could, to cut across the track of the fugitives a little ahead of them. The Archimandrite (Abbot) of Spazac, who had just arrived, came with us. He is a splendid man—a real fighter as well as a holy cleric, as good with his handjar as with his Bible, and a runner to beat the band. The marauders were going at a fearful pace, considering that they were all afoot; so we had to go fast also! Amongst these mountains there is no other means of progressing. Our own men were so aflame with ardour that I could not but notice that they, more than any of the others whom I had seen, had some special cause for concern.

When I mentioned it to the Archimandrite, who moved by my side, he answered:

“All natural enough; they are not only fighting for their country, but for their own!” I did not quite understand his answer, and so began to ask him some questions, to the effect that I soon began to understand a good deal more than he did.

Letter from Archbishop Stevan Paleologue, Head of the Eastern Church of the Blue Mountains, to the Lady Janet MacKelpie, Vissarion.

Written July 9, 1907.

HONOURED LADY,

As you wish for an understanding regarding the late lamentable occurrence in which so much danger was incurred to this our Land of the Blue Mountains, and one dear to us, I send these words by request of the Gospodar Rupert, beloved of our mountaineers.

When the Voivode Peter Vissarion made his journey to the great nation to whom we looked in our hour of need, it was necessary that he should go in secret. The Turk was at our gates, and full of the malice of baffled greed. Already he had tried to arrange a marriage with the Voivodin, so that in time to come he, as her husband, might have established a claim to the inheritance of the land. Well he knew, as do all men, that the Blue Mountaineers owe allegiance to none that they themselves do not appoint to rulership. This has been the history in the past. But now and again an individual has arisen or come to the front adapted personally for such government as this land requires. And so the Lady Teuta, Voivodin of the Blue Mountains, was put for her proper guarding in the charge of myself as Head of the Eastern Church in the Land of the Blue Mountains, steps being taken in such wise that no capture of her could be effected by unscrupulous enemies of this our Land. This task and guardianship was gladly held as an honour by all concerned. For the Voivodin Teuta of Vissarion must be taken as representing in her own

person the glory of the old Serb race, inasmuch as being the only child of the Voivode Vissarion, last male of his princely race—the race which ever, during the ten centuries of our history, unflinchingly gave life and all they held for the protection, safety, and well-being of the Land of the Blue Mountains. Never during those centuries had any one of the race been known to fail in patriotism, or to draw back from any loss or hardship enjoined by high duty or stress of need. Moreover, this was the race of that first Voivode Vissarion, of whom, in legend, it was prophesied that he—once known as “The Sword of Freedom,” a giant amongst men—would some day, when the nation had need of him, come forth from his water-tomb in the lost Lake of Reo, and lead once more the men of the Blue Mountains to lasting victory. This noble race, then, had come to be known as the last hope of the Land. So that when the Voivode was away on his country’s service, his daughter should be closely guarded. Soon after the Voivode had gone, it was reported that he might be long delayed in his diplomacies, and also in studying the system of Constitutional Monarchy, for which it had been hoped to exchange our imperfect political system. I may say *inter alia* that he was mentioned as to be the first king when the new constitution should have been arranged.

Then a great misfortune came on us; a terrible grief overshadowed the land. After a short illness, the Voivodin Teuta Vissarion died mysteriously of a mysterious ailment. The grief of the mountaineers was so great that it became necessary for the governing Council to warn them not to allow their sorrow to be seen. It was imperatively necessary that the fact of her death should be kept secret. For there were dangers and difficulties of several kinds. In the first place it was advisable that even her father should be kept in ignorance of his terrible loss. It was well known that he held her as the very core of his heart and that if he should hear of her death, he would be too much prostrated to be able to do the intricate and delicate work which he had undertaken. Nay, more: he would never remain afar off, under the sad circumstances, but would straightway return, so as to be in the land where she lay. Then suspicions would crop up, and the truth must shortly be known afield, with the inevitable result that the Land would become the very centre of a war of many nations.

In the second place, if the Turks were to know that the race of Vissarion was becoming extinct, this would encourage them to further aggression, which would become immediate should they find out that the Voivode was himself away. It was well known that they were already only suspending hostilities until a fitting opportunity should arise. Their desire for aggression had become acute after the refusal of the nation, and of the girl herself, that she should become a wife of the Sultan.

The dead girl had been buried in the Crypt of the church of St. Sava, and day after day and night after night, singly and in parties, the sorrowing mountaineers had come to pay devotion and reverence at her tomb. So many had wished to have a last glimpse of her face that the Vladika had, with my own consent as Archbishop, arranged for a glass cover to be put over the stone coffin wherein her body lay.

After a little time, however, there came a belief to all concerned in the guarding of the body—these, of course, being the priests of various degrees of dignity appointed to the task—that the Voivodin was not really dead, but only in a strangely-prolonged trance. Thereupon a new complication arose. Our mountaineers are, as perhaps you know, by nature deeply suspicious—a characteristic of all brave and self-sacrificing people who are jealous of their noble heritage. Having, as they believed, seen the girl dead, they might not be willing to accept the fact of her being alive. They might even imagine that there was on foot some deep, dark plot which was, or might be, a menace, now or hereafter, to their independence. In any case, there would be certain

to be two parties on the subject, a dangerous and deplorable thing in the present condition of affairs.

As the trance, or catalepsy, whatever it was, continued for many days, there had been ample time for the leaders of the Council, the Vladika, the priesthood represented by the Archimandrite of Spazac, myself as Archbishop and guardian of the Voivodin in her father's absence, to consult as to a policy to be observed in case of the girl awaking. For in such case the difficulty of the situation would be multiplied indefinitely. In the secret chambers of St. Sava's we had many secret meetings, and were finally converging on agreement when the end of the trance came.

The girl awoke!

She was, of course, terribly frightened when she found herself in a tomb in the Crypt. It was truly fortunate that the great candles around her tomb had been kept lighted, for their light mitigated the horror of the place. Had she waked in darkness, her reason might have become unseated.

She was, however, a very noble girl; brave, with extraordinary will, and resolution, and self-command, and power of endurance. When she had been taken into one of the secret chambers of the church, where she was warmed and cared for, a hurried meeting was held by the Vladika, myself, and the chiefs of the National Council. Word had been at once sent to me of the joyful news of her recovery; and with the utmost haste I came, arriving in time to take a part in the Council.

At the meeting the Voivodin was herself present, and full confidence of the situation was made to her. She herself proposed that the belief in her death should be allowed to prevail until the return of her father, when all could be effectively made clear. To this end she undertook to submit to the terrific strain which such a proceeding would involve. At first we men could not believe that any woman could go through with such a task, and some of us did not hesitate to voice our doubts—our disbelief. But she stood to her guns, and actually down-faced us. At the last we, remembering things that had been done, though long ages ago, by others of her race, came to believe not merely in her self-belief and intention, but even in the feasibility of her plan. She took the most solemn oaths not to betray the secret under any possible stress.

The priesthood undertook through the Vladika and myself to further a ghostly belief amongst the mountaineers which would tend to prevent a too close or too persistent observation. The Vampire legend was spread as a protection against partial discovery by any mischance, and other weird beliefs were set afoot and fostered. Arrangements were made that only on certain days were the mountaineers to be admitted to the Crypt, she agreeing that for these occasions she was to take opiates or carry out any other aid to the preservation of the secret. She was willing, she impressed upon us, to make any personal sacrifice which might be deemed necessary for the carrying out her father's task for the good of the nation.

Of course, she had at first terrible frights lying alone in the horror of the Crypt. But after a time the terrors of the situation, if they did not cease, were mitigated. There are secret caverns off the Crypt, wherein in troublous times the priests and others of high place have found safe retreat. One of these was prepared for the Voivodin, and there she remained, except for such times as she was on show—and certain other times of which I shall tell you. Provision was made for the possibility of any accidental visit to the church. At such times, warned by an automatic signal from the opening door, she was to take her place in the tomb. The mechanism was so arranged that the means to replace the glass cover, and to take the opiate, were there ready to her hand. There was to be always a watch of priests at night in the church, to guard her from ghostly fears as well as from more physical dangers; and if she was actually in her tomb, it was to be visited at

certain intervals. Even the draperies which covered her in the sarcophagus were rested on a bridge placed from side to side just above her, so as to hide the rising and falling of her bosom as she slept under the narcotic.

After a while the prolonged strain began to tell so much on her that it was decided that she should take now and again exercise out of doors. This was not difficult, for when the Vampire story which we had spread began to be widely known, her being seen would be accepted as a proof of its truth. Still, as there was a certain danger in her being seen at all, we thought it necessary to exact from her a solemn oath that so long as her sad task lasted she should under no circumstances ever wear any dress but her shroud—this being the only way to insure secrecy and to prevail against accident.

There is a secret way from the Crypt to a sea cavern, whose entrance is at high-tide under the water-line at the base of the cliff on which the church is built. A boat, shaped like a coffin, was provided for her; and in this she was accustomed to pass across the creek whenever she wished to make excursion. It was an excellent device, and most efficacious in disseminating the Vampire belief.

This state of things had now lasted from before the time when the Gospodar Rupert came to Vissarion up to the day of the arrival of the armoured yacht.

That night the priest on duty, on going his round of the Crypt just before dawn, found the tomb empty. He called the others, and they made full search. The boat was gone from the cavern, but on making search they found it on the farther side of the creek, close to the garden stairs. Beyond this they could discover nothing. She seemed to have disappeared without leaving a trace.

Straightway they went to the Vladika, and signalled to me by the fire-signal at the monastery at Astrag, where I then was. I took a band of mountaineers with me, and set out to scour the country. But before going I sent an urgent message to the Gospodar Rupert, asking him, who showed so much interest and love to our Land, to help us in our trouble. He, of course, knew nothing then of all have now told you. Nevertheless, he devoted himself whole-heartedly to our needs—as doubtless you know.

But the time had now come close when the Voivode Vissarion was about to return from his mission; and we of the council of his daughter's guardianship were beginning to arrange matters so that at his return the good news of her being still alive could be made public. With her father present to vouch for her, no question as to truth could arise.

But by some means the Turkish "Bureau of Spies" must have got knowledge of the fact already. To steal a dead body for the purpose of later establishing a fictitious claim would have been an enterprise even more desperate than that already undertaken. We inferred from many signs, made known to us in an investigation, that a daring party of the Sultan's emissaries had made a secret incursion with the object of kidnapping the Voivodin. They must have been bold of heart and strong of resource to enter the Land of the Blue Mountains on any errand, let alone such a desperate one as this. For centuries we have been teaching the Turk through bitter lessons that it is neither a safe task nor an easy one to make incursion here.

How they did it we know not—at present; but enter they did, and, after waiting in some secret hiding-place for a favourable opportunity, secured their prey. We know not even now whether they had found entrance to the Crypt and stole, as they thought, the dead body, or whether, by some dire mischance, they found her abroad—under her disguise as a ghost. At any rate, they had captured her, and through devious ways amongst the mountains were bearing her back to Turkey. It was manifest that when she was on Turkish soil the Sultan would force a marriage on

her so as eventually to secure for himself or his successors as against all other nations a claim for the suzerainty or guardianship of the Blue Mountains.

Such was the state of affairs when the Gospodar Rupert threw himself into the pursuit with fiery zeal and the Berserk passion which he inherited from Viking ancestors, whence of old came "The Sword of Freedom" himself.

But at that very time was another possibility which the Gospodar was himself the first to realize. Failing the getting the Voivodin safe to Turkish soil, the ravishers might kill her! This would be entirely in accord with the base traditions and history of the Moslems. So, too, it would accord with Turkish customs and the Sultan's present desires. It would, in its way, benefit the ultimate strategic ends of Turkey. For were once the Vissarion race at an end, the subjection of the Land of the Blue Mountains might, in their view, be an easier task than it had yet been found to be.

Such, illustrious lady, were the conditions of affairs when the Gospodar Rupert first drew his handjar for the Blue Mountains and what it held most dear.

PALEALOGUE, Archbishop of the Eastern Church, in the Land of the Blue Mountains.

#### RUPERT'S JOURNAL—Continued. July 8, 1907.

I wonder if ever in the long, strange history of the world had there come to any other such glad tidings as came to me—and even then rather inferentially than directly—from the Archimandrite's answers to my questioning. Happily I was able to restrain myself, or I should have created some strange confusion which might have evoked distrust, and would certainly have hampered us in our pursuit. For a little I could hardly accept the truth which wove itself through my brain as the true inwardness of each fact came home to me and took its place in the whole fabric. But even the most welcome truth has to be accepted some time by even a doubting heart. My heart, whatever it may have been, was not then a doubting heart, but a very, very grateful one. It was only the splendid magnitude of the truth which forbade its immediate acceptance. I could have shouted for joy, and only stilled myself by keeping my thoughts fixed on the danger which my wife was in. My wife! My wife! Not a Vampire; not a poor harassed creature doomed to terrible woe, but a splendid woman, brave beyond belief, patriotic in a way which has but few peers even in the wide history of bravery! I began to understand the true meaning of the strange occurrences that have come into my life. Even the origin and purpose of that first strange visit to my room became clear. No wonder that the girl could move about the Castle in so mysterious a manner. She had lived there all her life, and was familiar with the secret ways of entrance and exit. I had always believed that the place must have been honeycombed with secret passages. No wonder that she could find a way to the battlements, mysterious to everybody else. No wonder that she could meet me at the Flagstaff when she so desired.

To say that I was in a tumult would be to but faintly express my condition. I was rapt into a heaven of delight which had no measure in all my adventurous life—the lifting of the veil which showed that my wife—mine—won in all sincerity in the very teeth of appalling difficulties and dangers—was no Vampire, no corpse, no ghost or phantom, but a real woman of flesh and blood, of affection, and love, and passion. Now at last would my love be crowned indeed when, having rescued her from the marauders, I should bear her to my own home, where she would live and reign in peace and comfort and honour, and in love and wifely happiness if I could achieve such a blessing for her—and for myself.

But here a dreadful thought flashed across me, which in an instant turned my joy to despair, my throbbing heart to ice:

“As she is a real woman, she is in greater danger than ever in the hands of Turkish ruffians. To them a woman is in any case no more than a sheep; and if they cannot bring her to the harem of the Sultan, they may deem it the next wisest step to kill her. In that way, too, they might find a better chance of escape. Once rid of her the party could separate, and there might be a chance of some of them finding escape as individuals that would not exist for a party. But even if they did not kill her, to escape with her would be to condemn her to the worst fate of all the harem of the Turk! Lifelong misery and despair—however long that life might be—must be the lot of a Christian woman doomed to such a lot. And to her, just happily wedded, and after she had served her country in such a noble way as she had done, that dreadful life of shameful slavery would be a misery beyond belief.

“She must be rescued—and quickly! The marauders must be caught soon, and suddenly, so that they may have neither time nor opportunity to harm her, as they would be certain to do if they have warning of immediate danger.

“On! on!”

And “on” it was all through that terrible night as well as we could through the forest.

It was a race between the mountaineers and myself as to who should be first. I understood now the feeling that animated them, and which singled them out even from amongst their fiery comrades, when the danger of the Voivodin became known. These men were no mean contestants even in such a race, and, strong as I am, it took my utmost effort to keep ahead of them. They were keen as leopards, and as swift. Their lives had been spent among the mountains, and their hearts and souls on were in the chase. I doubt not that if the death of any one of us could have through any means effected my wife’s release, we should, if necessary, have fought amongst ourselves for the honour.

From the nature of the work before us our party had to keep to the top of the hills. We had not only to keep observation on the flying party whom we followed, and to prevent them making discovery of us, but we had to be always in a position to receive and answer signals made to us from the Castle, or sent to us from other eminences.

Letter from Petrof Vlastimir, Archimandrite of Spazac, to the Lady Janet MacKelpie, of Vissarion.

Written July 8, 1907.

GREAT LADY,

I am asked to write by the Vladika, and have permission of the Archbishop. I have the honour of transmitting to you the record of the pursuit of the Turkish spies who carried off the Voivodin Teuta, of the noble House of Vissarion. The pursuit was undertaken by the Gospodar Rupert, who asked that I would come with his party, since what he was so good as to call my “great knowledge of the country and its people” might serve much. It is true that I have had much knowledge of the Land of the Blue Mountains and its people, amongst which and whom my whole life has been passed. But in such a cause no reason was required. There was not a man in the Blue Mountains who would not have given his life for the Voivodin Teuta, and when they heard that she had not been dead, as they thought, but only in a trance, and that it was she whom the marauders had carried off, they were in a frenzy. So why should I—to whom has been given the great trust of the Monastery of Spazac—hesitate at such a time? For myself, I wanted to hurry on, and to come at once to the fight with my country’s foes; and well I knew that the

Gospodar Rupert, with a lion's heart meet for his giant body, would press on with a matchless speed. We of the Blue Mountains do not lag when our foes are in front of us; most of all do we of the Eastern Church press on when the Crescent wars against the Cross!

We took with us no gear or hamper of any kind; no coverings except what we stood in; no food—nothing but our handjars and our rifles, with a sufficiency of ammunition. Before starting, the Gospodar gave hurried orders by signal from the Castle to have food and ammunition sent to us (as we might signal) by the nearest hamlet.

It was high noon when we started, only ten strong—for our leader would take none but approved runners who could shoot straight and use the handjar as it should be used. So as we went light, we expected to go fast. By this time we knew from the reports signalled to Vissarion that the enemies were chosen men of no despicable prowess.

The Keeper of the Green Flag of Islam is well served, and as though the Turk is an infidel and a dog, he is sometimes brave and strong. Indeed, except when he passes the confines of the Blue Mountains, he has been known to do stirring deeds. But as none who have dared to wander in amongst our hills ever return to their own land, we may not know of how they speak at home of their battles here. Still, these men were evidently not to be despised; and our Gospodar, who is a wise man as well as a valiant, warned us to be prudent, and not to despise our foes over much. We did as he counselled, and in proof we only took ten men, as we had only twenty against us. But then there was at stake much beyond life, and we took no risks. So, as the great clock at Vissarion clanged of noon, the eight fastest runners of the Blue Mountains, together with the Gospodar Rupert and myself, swept out on our journey. It had been signalled to us that the course which the marauders had as yet taken in their flight was a zigzag one, running eccentrically at all sorts of angles in all sorts of directions. But our leader had marked out a course where we might intercept our foes across the main line of their flight; and till we had reached that region we paused not a second, but went as fast as we could all night long. Indeed, it was amongst us a race as was the Olympic race of old Greece, each one vying with his fellows, though not in jealous emulation, but in high spirit, to best serve his country and the Voivodin Teuta. Foremost amongst us went the Gospodar, bearing himself as a Paladin of old, his mighty form pausing for no obstacle. Perpetually did he urge us on. He would not stop or pause for a moment, but often as he and I ran together—for, lady, in my youth I was the fleetest of all in the race, and even that now can head a battalion when duty calls—he would ask me certain questions as to the Lady Teuta and of the strange manner of her reputed death, as it was gradually unfolded in my answers to his questioning. And as each new phase of knowledge came to him, he would rush on as one possessed of fiends: whereat our mountaineers, who seem to respect even fiends for their thoroughness, would strive to keep pace with him till they too seemed worked into diabolic possession. And I myself, left alone in the calmness of sacerdotal office, forgot even that. With surging ears and eyes that saw blood, I rushed along with best of them.

Then truly the spirit of a great captain showed itself in the Gospodar, for when others were charged with fury he began to force himself into calm, so that out of his present self-command and the memory of his exalted position came a worthy strategy and thought for every contingency that might arise. So that when some new direction was required for our guidance, there was no hesitation in its coming. We, nine men of varying kinds, all felt that we had a master; and so, being willing to limit ourselves to strict obedience, we were free to use such thoughts as well as such powers as we had to the best advantage of the doing.

We came across the trail of the flying marauders on the second morning after the abduction, a little before noon. It was easy enough to see, for by this time the miscreants were all together,

and our people, who were woodlanders, were able to tell much of the party that passed. These were evidently in a terrified hurry, for they had taken no precautions such as are necessary baffle pursuit, and all of which take time. Our foresters said that two went ahead and two behind. In the centre went the mass, moving close together, as though surrounding their prisoner. We caught not even a single glimpse her—could not have, they encompassed her so closely. But our foresters saw other than the mass; the ground that had been passed was before them. They knew that the prisoner had gone unwillingly—nay, more: one of them said as he rose from his knees, where he had been examining of the ground:

“The misbegotten dogs have been urging her on with their yataghans! There are drops of blood, though there are no blood-marks on her feet.”

Whereupon the Gospodar flamed with passion. His teeth ground together, and with a deep-breathed “On, on!” he sprang off again, handjar in hand, on the track.

Before long we saw the party in the distance. They this were far below us in a deep valley, although the track of their going passed away to the right hand. They were making for the base of the great cliff, which rose before us all. Their reason was twofold, as we soon knew. Far off down the valley which they were crossing we saw signs of persons coming in haste, who must be of the search party coming from the north. Though the trees hid them, we could not mistake the signs. I was myself forester enough to have no doubt. Again, it was evident that the young Voivodin could travel no longer at the dreadful pace at which they had been going. Those blood-marks told their own tale! They meant to make a last stand here in case they should be discovered.

Then it was that he, who amongst us all had been most fierce and most bent on rapid pursuit, became the most the calm. Raising his hand for silence—though, God knows, we were and had been silent enough during that long rush through the forest—he said, in a low, keen whisper which cut the silence like a knife:

“My friends, the time is come for action. God be thanked, who has now brought us face to face with our foes! But we must be careful here—not on our own account, for we wish nothing more than to rush on and conquer or die—but for the sake of her whom you love, and whom I, too, love. She is in danger from anything which may give warning to those fiends. If they know or even suspect for an instant that we are near, they will murder her . . . “

Here his voice broke for an instant with the extremity of his passion or the depth of his feeling—I hardly know which; I think both acted on him.

“We know from those blood-marks what they can do—even to her.” His teeth ground together again, but he went on without stopping further:

“Let us arrange the battle. Though we are but little distance from them as the crow flies, the way is far to travel. There is, I can see, but one path down to the valley from this side. That they have gone by, and that they will sure to guard—to watch, at any rate. Let us divide, as to surround them. The cliff towards which they make runs far to the left without a break. That to the right we cannot see from this spot; but from the nature of the ground it is not unlikely that it turns round in this direction, making the hither end of the valley like a vast pocket or amphitheatre. As they have studied the ground in other places, they may have done so in this, and have come hither as to a known refuge. Let one man, a marksman, stay here.”

As he spoke a man stepped to the front. He was, I knew, an excellent shot.

“Let two others go to the left and try to find a way down the cliff before us. When they have descended to the level of the valley—path or no path—let them advance cautiously and secretly, keeping their guns in readiness. But they must not fire till need. Remember, my brothers,” said,

turning to those who stepped out a pace or two to the left, "that the first shot gives the warning which will be the signal for the Voivodin's death. These men will not hesitate. You must judge yourselves of the time to shoot. The others of us will move to the right and try to find a path on that side. If the valley be indeed a pocket between the cliffs, we must find a way down that is not a path!"

As he spoke thus there was a blaze in his eyes that betokened no good to aught that might stand in his way. I ran by his side as we moved to the right.

It was as he surmised about the cliff. When we got a little on our way we saw how the rocky formation trended to our right, till, finally, with a wide curve, it came round to the other side.

It was a fearful valley that, with its narrow girth and its towering walls that seemed to topple over. On the farther side from us the great trees that clothed the slope of the mountain over it grew down to the very edge of the rock, so that their spreading branches hung far over the chasm. And, so far as we could understand, the same condition existed on our own side. Below us the valley was dark even in the daylight. We could best tell the movement of the flying marauders by the flashes of the white shroud of their captive in the midst of them.

From where we were grouped, amid the great tree-trunks on the very brow of the cliff, we could, when our eyes were accustomed to the shadow, see them quite well. In great haste, and half dragging, half carrying the Voivodin, they crossed the open space and took refuge in a little grassy alcove surrounded, save for its tortuous entrance, by undergrowth. From the valley level it was manifestly impossible to see them, though we from our altitude could see over the stunted undergrowth. When within the glade, they took their hands from her. She, shuddering instinctively, withdrew to a remote corner of the dell.

And then, oh, shame on their manhood!—Turks and heathens though they were—we could see that they had submitted her to the indignity of gagging her and binding her hands!

Our Voivodin Teuta bound! To one and all of us it was like lashing us across the face. I heard the Gospodar's teeth grind again. But once more he schooled himself to calmness ere he said:

"It is, perhaps, as well, great though the indignity be. They are seeking their own doom, which is coming quickly . . . Moreover, they are thwarting their own base plans. Now that she is bound they will trust to their binding, so that they will delay their murderous alternative to the very last moment. Such is our chance of rescuing her alive!"

For a few moments he stood as still as a stone, as though revolving something in his mind whilst he watched. I could see that some grim resolution was forming in his mind, for his eyes ranged to the top of the trees above cliff, and down again, very slowly this time, as though measuring and studying the detail of what was in front of him. Then he spoke:

"They are in hopes that the other pursuing party may not come across them. To know that, they are waiting. If those others do not come up the valley, they will proceed on their way. They will return up the path the way they came. There we can wait them, charge into the middle of them when she is opposite, and cut down those around her. Then the others will open fire, and we shall be rid of them!"

Whilst he was speaking, two of the men of our party, who I knew to be good sharpshooters, and who had just before lain on their faces and had steadied their rifles to shoot, rose to their feet.

"Command us, Gospodar!" they said simply, as they stood to attention. "Shall we go to the head of the ravine road and there take hiding?" He thought for perhaps a minute, whilst we all stood as silent as images. I could hear our hearts beating. Then he said:

“No, not yet. There is time for that yet. They will not—cannot stir or make plans in any way till they know whether the other party is coming towards them or not. From our height here we can see what course the others are taking long before those villains do. Then we can make our plans and be ready in time.

We waited many minutes, but could see no further signs the other pursuing party. These had evidently adopted greater caution in their movements as they came closer to where they expected to find the enemy. The marauders began to grow anxious. Even at our distance we could gather as much from their attitude and movements.

Presently, when the suspense of their ignorance grew too much for them, they drew to the entrance of the glade, which was the farthest place to which, without exposing themselves to anyone who might come to the valley, they could withdraw from their captive. Here they consulted together. We could follow from their gestures what they were saying, for as they did not wish their prisoner to hear, their gesticulation was enlightening to us as to each other. Our people, like all mountaineers, have good eyes, and the Gospodar is himself an eagle in this as in other ways. Three men stood back from the rest. They stacked their rifles so that they could seize them easily. Then they drew their scimitars, and stood ready, as though on guard.

These were evidently the appointed murderers. Well they knew their work; for though they stood in a desert place with none within long distance except the pursuing party, of whose approach they would have good notice, they stood so close to their prisoner that no marksman in the world—now or that ever had been; not William Tell himself— could have harmed any of them without at least endangering her. Two of them turned the Voivodin round so that her face was towards the precipice—in which position she could not see what was going on— whilst he who was evidently leader of the gang explained, in gesture, that the others were going to spy upon the pursuing party. When they had located them he, or one of his men, would come out of the opening of the wood wherein they had had evidence of them, and hold up his hand.

That was to be the signal for the cutting of the victim’s throat— such being the chosen method (villainous even for heathen murderers) of her death. There was not one of our men who did not grind his teeth when we witnessed the grim action, only too expressive, of the Turk as he drew his right hand, clenched as though he held a yataghan in it, across his throat.

At the opening of the glade all the spying party halted whilst the leader appointed to each his place of entry of the wood, the front of which extended in an almost straight across the valley from cliff to cliff.

The men, stooping low when in the open, and taking instant advantage of every little obstacle on the ground, seemed to fade like spectres with incredible swiftness across the level mead, and were swallowed up in the wood.

When they had disappeared the Gospodar Rupert revealed to us the details of the plan of action which he had revolving in his mind. He motioned us to follow him: we threaded a way between the tree-trunks, keeping all the while on the very edge of the cliff, so that the space below was all visible to us. When we had got round the curve sufficiently to see the whole of the wood on the valley level, without losing sight of the Voivodin and her appointed assassins, we halted under his direction. There was an added advantage of this point over the other, for we could see directly the rising of the hill-road, up which farther side ran the continuation of the mountain path which the marauders had followed. It was somewhere on that path that the other pursuing party had hoped to intercept the fugitives. The Gospodar spoke quickly, though in a voice of command which true soldiers love to hear:

“Brothers, the time has come when we can strike a blow for Teuta and the Land. Do you two, marksmen, take position here facing the wood.” The two men here lay down and got their rifles ready. “Divide the frontage of the wood between you; arrange between yourselves the limits of your positions. The very instant one of the marauders appears, cover him; drop him before he emerges from the wood. Even then still watch and treat similarly whoever else may take his place. Do this if they come singly till not a man is left. Remember, brothers, that brave hearts alone will not suffice at this grim crisis. In this hour the best safety of the Voivodin is in the calm spirit and the steady eye!” Then he turned to the rest of us, and spoke to me:

“Archimandrite of Plazac, you who are interpreter to God of the prayers of so many souls, my own hour has come. If I do not return, convey my love to my Aunt Janet—Miss MacKelpie, at Vissarion. There is but one thing left to us if we wish to save the Voivodin. Do you, when the time comes, take these men and join the watcher at the top of the ravine road. When the shots are fired, do you out handjar, and rush the ravine and across the valley. Brothers, you may be in time to avenge the Voivodin, if you cannot save her. For me there must be a quicker way, and to it I go. As there is not, and will not be, time to traverse the path, I must take a quicker way. Nature finds me a path that man has made it necessary for me to travel. See that giant beech-tree that towers above the glade where the Voivodin is held? There is my path! When you from here have marked the return of the spies, give me a signal with your hat—do not use a handkerchief, as others might see its white, and take warning. Then rush that ravine. I shall take that as the signal for my descent by the leafy road. If I can do naught else, I can crush the murderers with my falling weight, even if I have to kill her too. At least we shall die together—and free. Lay us together in the tomb at St. Sava’s. Farewell, if it be the last!”

He threw down the scabbard in which he carried his handjar, adjusted the naked weapon in his belt behind his back, and was gone!

We who were not watching the wood kept our eyes fixed on the great beech-tree, and with new interest noticed the long trailing branches which hung low, and swayed even in the gentle breeze. For a few minutes, which seemed amazingly long, we saw no sign of him. Then, high up on one of the great branches which stood clear of obscuring leaves, we saw something crawling flat against the bark. He was well out on the branch, hanging far over the precipice. He was looking over at us, and I waved my hand so that he should know we saw him. He was clad in green—his usual forest dress—so that there was not any likelihood of any other eyes noticing him. I took off my hat, and held it ready to signal with when the time should come. I glanced down at the glade and saw the Voivodin standing, still safe, with her guards so close to her as to touch. Then I, too, fixed my eyes on the wood.

Suddenly the man standing beside me seized my arm and pointed. I could just see through the trees, which were lower than elsewhere in the front of the wood, a Turk moving stealthily; so I waved my hat. At the same time a rifle underneath me cracked. A second or two later the spy pitched forward on his face and lay still. At the same instant my eyes sought the beech-tree, and I saw the close-lying figure raise itself and slide forward to a joint of the branch. Then the Gospodar, as he rose, hurled himself forward amid the mass of the trailing branches. He dropped like a stone, and my heart sank.

But an instant later he seemed in poise. He had clutched the thin, trailing branches as he fell; and as he sank a number of leaves which his motion had torn off floated out round him.

Again the rifle below me cracked, and then again, and again, and again. The marauders had taken warning, and were coming out in mass. But my own eyes were fixed on the tree. Almost as a thunderbolt falls fell the giant body of the Gospodar, his size lost in the immensity of his

surroundings. He fell in a series of jerks, as he kept clutching the trailing beech-branches whilst they lasted, and then other lesser verdure growing out from the fissures in the rock after the lengthening branches had with all their elasticity reached their last point.

At length—for though this all took place in a very few seconds the gravity of the crisis prolonged them immeasurably—there came a large space of rock some three times his own length. He did not pause, but swung himself to one side, so that he should fall close to the Voivodin and her guards. These men did not seem to notice, for their attention was fixed on the wood whence they expected their messenger to signal. But they raised their yataghans in readiness. The shots had alarmed them; and they meant to do the murder now—messenger or no messenger

But though the men did not see the danger from above, the Voivodin did. She raised her eyes quickly at the first sound, and even from where we were, before we began to run towards the ravine path, I could see the triumphant look in her glorious eyes when she recognized the identity of the man who was seemingly coming straight down from Heaven itself to help her—as, indeed, she, and we too, can very well imagine that he did; for if ever heaven had a hand in a rescue on earth, it was now.

Even during the last drop from the rocky foliage the Gospodar kept his head. As he fell he pulled his handjar free, and almost as he was falling its sweep took off the head of one of the assassins. As he touched ground he stumbled for an instant, but it was towards his enemies. Twice with lightning rapidity the handjar swept the air, and at each sweep a head rolled on the sward.

The Voivodin held up her tied hands. Again the handjar flashed, this time downwards, and the lady was free. Without an instant's pause the Gospodar tore off the gag, and with his left arm round her and handjar in right hand, stood face toward his living foes. The Voivodin stooped suddenly, and then, raising the yataghan which had fallen from the hand of one of the dead marauders, stood armed beside him.

The rifles were now cracking fast, as the marauders—those that were left of them—came rushing out into the open. But well the marksmen knew their work. Well they bore in mind the Gospodar's command regarding calmness. They kept picking off the foremost men only, so that the onward rush never seemed to get more forward.

As we rushed down the ravine we could see clearly all before us. But now, just as we were beginning to fear lest some mischance might allow some of them to reach the glade, there was another cause of surprise—of rejoicing.

From the face of the wood seemed to burst all at once a body of men, all wearing the national cap, so we knew them as our own. They were all armed with the handjar only, and they came like tigers. They swept on the rushing Turks as though, for all their swiftness, they were standing still—literally wiping them out as a child wipes a lesson from its slate.

A few seconds later these were followed by a tall figure with long hair and beard of black mingled with grey. Instinctively we all, as did those in the valley, shouted with joy. For this was the Vladika Milosh Plamenac himself.

I confess that, knowing what I knew, I was for a short space of time anxious lest, in the terrific excitement in which we were all lapped, someone might say or do something which might make for trouble later on. The Gospodar's splendid achievement, which was worthy of any hero of old romance, had set us all on fire. He himself must have been wrought to a high pitch of excitement to dare such an act; and it is not at such a time that discretion must be expected from any man. Most of all did I fear danger from the womanhood of the Voivodin. Had I not assisted at her

marriage, I might not have understood then what it must have been to her to be saved from such a doom at such a time by such a man, who was so much to her, and in such a way. It would have been only natural if at such a moment of gratitude and triumph she had proclaimed the secret which we of the Council of the Nation and her father's Commissioners had so religiously kept. But none of us knew then either the Voivodin or the Gospodar Rupert as we do now. It was well that they were as they are, for the jealousy and suspicion of our mountaineers might, even at such a moment, and even whilst they throbbed at such a deed, have so manifested themselves as to have left a legacy of distrust. The Vladika and I, who of all (save the two immediately concerned) alone knew, looked at each other apprehensively. But at that instant the Voivodin, with a swift glance at her husband, laid a finger on her lip; and he, with quick understanding, gave assurance by a similar sign. Then she sank before him on one knee, and, raising his hand to her lips, kissed it, and spoke:

"Gospodar Rupert, I owe you all that a woman may owe, except to God. You have given me life and honour! I cannot thank you adequately for what you have done; my father will try to do so when he returns. But I am right sure that the men of the Blue Mountains, who so value honour, and freedom, and liberty, and bravery, will hold you in their hearts for ever!"

This was so sweetly spoken, with lips that trembled and eyes that swam in tears, so truly womanly and so in accord with the custom of our nation regarding the reverence that women owe to men, that the hearts of our mountaineers were touched to the quick. Their noble simplicity found expression in tears. But if the gallant Gospodar could have for a moment thought that so to weep was unmanly, his error would have had instant correction. When the Voivodin had risen to her feet, which she did with queenly dignity, the men around closed in on the Gospodar like a wave of the sea, and in a second held him above their heads, tossing on their lifted hands as if on stormy breakers. It was as though the old Vikings of whom we have heard, and whose blood flows in Rupert's veins, were choosing a chief in old fashion. I was myself glad that the men were so taken up with the Gospodar that they did not see the glory of the moment in the Voivodin's starry eyes; for else they might have guessed the secret. I knew from the Vladika's look that he shared my own satisfaction, even as he had shared my anxiety.

As the Gospodar Rupert was tossed high on the lifted hands of the mountaineers, their shouts rose to such a sudden volume that around us, as far as I could see, the frightened birds rose from the forest, and their noisy alarm swelled the tumult.

The Gospodar, ever thoughtful for others, was the first to calm himself.

"Come, brothers," he said, "let us gain the hilltop, where we can signal to the Castle. It is right that the whole nation should share in the glad tidings that the Voivodin Teuta of Vissarion is free. But before we go, let us remove the arms and clothing of these carrion marauders. We may have use for them later on."

The mountaineers set him down, gently enough. And he, taking the Voivodin by the hand, and calling the Vladika and myself close to them, led the way up the ravine path which the marauders had descended, and thence through the forest to the top of the hill that dominated the valley. Here we could, from an opening amongst the trees, catch a glimpse far off of the battlements of Vissarion. Forthwith the Gospodar signalled; and on the moment a reply of their awaiting was given. Then the Gospodar signalled the glad news. It was received with manifest rejoicing. We could not hear any sound so far away, but we could see the movement of lifted faces and waving hands, and knew that it was well. But an instant after came a calm so dread that we knew before the semaphore had begun to work that there was bad news in store for us. When the news did come, a bitter wailing arose amongst us; for the news that was signalled ran:

“The Voivode has been captured by the Turks on his return, and is held by them at Ilsin.”

In an instant the temper of the mountaineers changed. It was as though by a flash summer had changed to winter, as though the yellow glory of the standing corn had been obliterated by the dreary waste of snow. Nay, more: it was as when one beholds the track of the whirlwind when the giants of the forest are levelled with the sward. For a few seconds there was silence; and then, with an angry roar, as when God speaks in the thunder, came the fierce determination of the men of the Blue Mountains:

“To Ilsin! To Ilsin!” and a stampede in the direction of the south began. For, Illustrious Lady, you, perhaps, who have been for so short a time at Vissarion, may not know that at the extreme southern point of the Land of the Blue Mountains lies the little port of Ilsin, which long ago we wrested from the Turk.

The stampede was checked by the command, “Halt!” spoken in a thunderous voice by the Gospodar. Instinctively all stopped. The Gospodar Rupert spoke again:

“Had we not better know a little more before we start on our journey? I shall get by semaphore what details are known. Do you all proceed in silence and as swiftly as possible. The Vladika and I will wait here till we have received the news and have sent some instructions, when we shall follow, and, if we can, overtake you. One thing: be absolutely silent on what has been. Be secret of every detail—even as to the rescue of the Voivodin—except what I send.”

Without a word—thus showing immeasurable trust—the whole body—not a very large one, it is true—moved on, and the Gospodar began signalling. As I was myself expert in the code, I did not require any explanation, but followed question and answer on either side. The first words the Gospodar Rupert signalled were:

“Silence, absolute and profound, as to everything which has been.” Then he asked for details of the capture of the Voivode. The answer ran:

“He was followed from Flushing, and his enemies advised by the spies all along the route. At Ragusa quite a number of strangers—travellers seemingly—went on board the packet. When he got out, the strangers debarked too, and evidently followed him, though, as yet, we have no details. He disappeared at Ilsin from the Hotel Reo, whither he had gone. All possible steps are being taken to trace his movements, and strictest silence and secrecy are observed.”

His answer was:

“Good! Keep silent and secret. Am hurrying back. Signal request to Archbishop and all members of National Council to come to Gadaar with all speed. There the yacht will meet him. Tell Rooke take yacht all speed to Gadaar; there meet Archbishop and Council—give him list of names—and return full speed. Have ready plenty arms, six flying artillery. Two hundred men, provisions three days. Silence, silence. All depends on that. All to go on as usual at Castle, except to those in secret.”

When the receipt of his message had been signalled, we three—for, of course, the Voivodin was with us; she had refused to leave the Gospodar—set out hot-foot after our comrades. But by the time we had descended the hill it was evident that the Voivodin could not keep up the terrific pace at which we were going. She struggled heroically, but the long journey she had already taken, and the hardship and anxiety she had suffered, had told on her. The Gospodar stopped, and said that it would be better that he should press on—it was, perhaps, her father’s life—and said he would carry her.

“No, no!” she answered. “Go on! I shall follow with the Vladika. And then you can have things ready to get on soon after the Archbishop and Council arrive.” They kissed each other after, on her part, a shy glance at me; and he went on the track of our comrades at a great pace. I could see

him shortly after catch them up,—though they, too, were going fast. For a few minutes they ran together, he speaking—I could note it from the way they kept turning their heads towards him. Then he broke away from them hurriedly. He went like a stag breaking covert, and was soon out of sight. They halted a moment or two. Then some few ran on, and all the rest came back towards us. Quickly they improvised a litter with cords and branches, and insisted that the Voivodin should use it. In an incredibly short time we were under way again, and proceeding with great rapidity towards Vissarion. The men took it in turns to help with the litter; I had the honour of taking a hand in the work myself.

About a third of the way out from Vissarion a number of our people met us. They were fresh, and as they carried the litter, we who were relieved were free for speed. So we soon arrived at the Castle.

Here we found all humming like a hive of bees. The yacht, which Captain Rooke had kept fired ever since the pursuing party under the Gospodar had left Vissarion, was already away, and tearing up the coast at a fearful rate. The rifles and ammunition were stacked on the quay. The field-guns, too, were equipped, and the cases of ammunition ready to ship. The men, two hundred of them, were paraded in full kit, ready to start at a moment's notice. The provision for three days was all ready to put aboard, and barrels of fresh water to trundle aboard when the yacht should return. At one end of the quay, ready to lift on board, stood also the Gospodar's aeroplane, fully equipped, and ready, if need were, for immediate flight.

I was glad to see that the Voivodin seemed none the worse for her terrible experience. She still wore her shroud; but no one seemed to notice it as anything strange. The whisper had evidently gone round of what had been. But discretion ruled the day. She and the Gospodar met as two who had served and suffered in common; but I was glad to notice that both kept themselves under such control that none of those not already in the secret even suspected that there was any love between them, let alone marriage.

We all waited with what patience we could till word was signalled from the Castle tower that the yacht had appeared over the northern horizon, and was coming down fast, keeping inshore as she came.

When she arrived, we heard to our joy that all concerned had done their work well. The Archbishop was aboard, and of the National Council not one was missing. The Gospodar hurried them all into the great hall of the Castle, which had in the meantime been got ready. I, too, went with him, but the Voivodin remained without.

When all were seated, he rose and said:

“My Lord Archbishop, Vladika, and Lords of the Council all, I have dared to summon you in this way because time presses, and the life of one you all love—the Voivode Vissarion—is at stake. This audacious attempt of the Turk is the old aggression under a new form. It is a new and more daring step than ever to try to capture your chief and his daughter, the Voivodin, whom you love. Happily, the latter part of the scheme is frustrated. The Voivodin is safe and amongst us. But the Voivode is held prisoner—if, indeed, he be still alive. He must be somewhere near Ilsin—but where exactly we know not as yet. We have an expedition ready to start the moment we receive your sanction—your commands. We shall obey your wishes with our lives. But as the matter is instant, I would venture to ask one question, and one only: ‘Shall we rescue the Voivode at any cost that may present itself?’ I ask this, for the matter has now become an international one, and, if our enemies are as earnest as we are, the issue is war!

Having so spoken, and with a dignity and force which is inexpressible, he withdrew; and the Council, having appointed a scribe—the monk Cristoferos, whom I had suggested—began its work.

The Archbishop spoke:

“Lords of the Council of the Blue Mountains, I venture to ask you that the answer to the Gospodar Rupert be an instant ‘Yes!’ together with thanks and honour to that gallant Englisher, who has made our cause his own, and who has so valiantly rescued our beloved Voivodin from the ruthless hands of our enemies.” Forthwith the oldest member of the Council—Nicolos of Volok—rose, and, after throwing a searching look round the faces of all, and seeing grave nods of assent—for not a word was spoken—said to him who held the door: “Summon the Gospodar Rupert forthwith!” When Rupert entered, he spoke to him:

“Gospodar Rupert, the Council of the Blue Mountains has only one answer to give: Proceed! Rescue the Voivode Vissarion, whatever the cost may be! You hold henceforth in your hand the handjar of our nation, as already, for what you have done in your valiant rescue of our beloved Voivodin, your breast holds the heart of our people. Proceed at once! We give you, I fear, little time; but we know that such is your own wish. Later, we shall issue formal authorization, so that if war may ensue, our allies may understand that you have acted for the nation, and also such letters credential as may be required by you in this exceptional service. These shall follow you within an hour. For our enemies we take no account. See, we draw the handjar that we offer you.” As one man all in the hall drew their handjars, which flashed as a blaze of lightning.

There did not seem to be an instant’s delay. The Council broke up, and its members, mingling with the people without, took active part in the preparations. Not many minutes had elapsed when the yacht, manned and armed and stored as arranged, was rushing out of the creek. On the bridge, beside Captain Rooke, stood the Gospodar Rupert and the still-shrouded form of the Voivodin Teuta. I myself was on the lower deck with the soldiers, explaining to certain of them the special duties which they might be called on to fulfil. I held the list which the Gospodar Rupert had prepared whilst we were waiting for the yacht to arrive from Gadaar.

PETROF VLASTIMIR.

FROM RUPERT’S JOURNAL—Continued. July 9, 1907.

We went at a terrific pace down the coast, keeping well inshore so as to avoid, if possible, being seen from the south. Just north of Ilsin a rocky headland juts out, and that was our cover. On the north of the peninsula is a small land-locked bay, with deep water. It is large enough to take the yacht, though a much larger vessel could not safely enter. We ran in, and anchored close to the shore, which has a rocky frontage—a natural shelf of rock, which is practically the same as a quay. Here we met the men who had come from Ilsin and the neighbourhood in answer to our signalling earlier in the day. They gave us the latest information regarding the kidnapping of the Voivode, and informed us that every man in that section of the country was simply aflame about it. They assured us that we could rely on them, not merely to fight to the death, but to keep silence absolutely. Whilst the seamen, under the direction of Rooke, took the aeroplane on shore and found a suitable place for it, where it was hidden from casual view, but from which it could be easily launched, the Vladika and I—and, of course, my wife—were hearing such details as were known of the disappearance of her father.

It seems that he travelled secretly in order to avoid just such a possibility as has happened. No one knew of his coming till he came to Fiume, whence he sent a guarded message to the

Archbishop, which the latter alone would understand. But this Turkish agents were evidently on his track all the time, and doubtless the Bureau of Spies was kept well advised. He landed at Ilsin from a coasting steamer from Ragusa to the Levant.

For two days before his coming there had been quite an unusual number of arrivals at the little port, at which arrivals are rare. And it turned out that the little hotel—the only fairly good one in Ilsin— was almost filled up. Indeed, only one room was left, which the Voivode took for the night. The innkeeper did not know the Voivode in his disguise, but suspected who it was from the description. He dined quietly, and went to bed. His room was at the back, on the ground-floor, looking out on the bank of the little River Silva, which here runs into the harbour. No disturbance was heard in the night. Late in the morning, when the elderly stranger had not made his appearance, inquiry was made at his door. He did not answer, so presently the landlord forced the door, and found the room empty. His luggage was seemingly intact, only the clothes which he had worn were gone. A strange thing was that, though the bed had been slept in and his clothes were gone, his night-clothes were not to be found, from which it was argued by the local authorities, when they came to make inquiry, that he had gone or been taken from the room in his night-gear, and that his clothes had been taken with him. There was evidently some grim suspicion on the part of the authorities, for they had commanded absolute silence on all in the house. When they came to make inquiry as to the other guests, it was found that one and all had gone in the course of the morning, after paying their bills. None of them had any heavy luggage, and there was nothing remaining by which they might be traced or which would afford any clue to their identity. The authorities, having sent a confidential report to the seat of government, continued their inquiries, and even now all available hands were at work on the investigation. When I had signalled to Vissarion, before my arrival there, word had been sent through the priesthood to enlist in the investigation the services of all good men, so that every foot of ground in that section of the Blue Mountains was being investigated. The port-master was assured by his watchmen that no vessel, large or small, had heft the harbour during the night. The inference, therefore, was that the Voivode's captors had made inland with him—if, indeed, they were not already secreted in or near the town.

Whilst we were receiving the various reports, a hurried message came that it was now believed that the whole party were in the Silent Tower. This was a well-chosen place for such an enterprise. It was a massive tower of immense strength, built as a memorial—and also as a “keep”—after one of the massacres of the invading Turks.

It stood on the summit of a rocky knoll some ten miles inland from the Port of Ilsin. It was a place shunned as a rule, and the country all around it was so arid and desolate that there were no residents near it. As it was kept for state use, and might be serviceable in time of war, it was closed with massive iron doors, which were kept locked except upon certain occasions. The keys were at the seat of government at Plazac. If, therefore, it had been possible to the Turkish marauders to gain entrance and exit, it might be a difficult as well as a dangerous task to try to cut the Voivode out. His presence with them was a dangerous menace to any force attacking them, for they would hold his life as a threat.

I consulted with the Vladika at once as to what was best to be done. And we decided that, though we should put a cordon of guards around it at a safe distance to prevent them receiving warning, we should at present make no attack.

We made further inquiry as to whether there had been any vessel seen in the neighbourhood during the past few days, and were informed that once or twice a warship had been seen on the near side of the southern horizon. This was evidently the ship which Rooke had seen on his rush

down the coast after the abduction of the Voivodin, and which he had identified as a Turkish vessel. The glimpses of her which had been had were all in full daylight—there was no proof that she had not stolen up during the night-time without lights. But the Vladika and I were satisfied that the Turkish vessel was watching— was in league with both parties of marauders—and was intended to take off any of the strangers, or their prey, who might reach Ilsin undetected. It was evidently with this view that the kidnappers of Teuta had, in the first instance, made with all speed for the south. It was only when disappointed there that they headed up north, seeking in desperation for some chance of crossing the border. That ring of steel had so far well served its purpose.

I sent for Rooke, and put the matter before him. He had thought it out for himself to the same end as we had. His deduction was:

“Let us keep the cordon, and watch for any signal from the Silent Tower. The Turks will tire before we shall. I undertake to watch the Turkish warship. During the night I shall run down south, without lights, and have a look at her, even if I have to wait till the grey of the dawn to do so. She may see us; but if she does I shall crawl away at such pace that she shall not get any idea of our speed. She will certainly come nearer before a day is over, for be sure the bureau of spies is kept advised, and they know that when the country is awake each day increases the hazard of them and their plans being discovered. From their caution I gather that they do not court discovery; and from that that they do not wish for an open declaration of war. If this be so, why should we not come out to them and force an issue if need be?”

When Teuta and I got a chance to be alone, we discussed the situation in every phase. The poor girl was in a dreadful state of anxiety regarding her father’s safety. At first she was hardly able to speak, or even to think, coherently. Her utterance was choked, and her reasoning palsied with indignation. But presently the fighting blood of her race restored her faculties, and then her woman’s quick wit was worth the reasoning of a camp full of men. Seeing that she was all on fire with the subject, I sat still and waited, taking care not to interrupt her. For quite a long time she sat still, whilst the coming night thickened. When she spoke, the whole plan of action, based on subtle thinking, had mapped itself out in her mind:

“We must act quickly. Every hour increases the risk to my father.” Here her voice broke for an instant; but she recovered herself and went on:

“If you go to the ship, I must not go with you. It would not do for me to be seen. The Captain doubtless knows of both attempts: that to carry me off as well as that against my father. As yet he is in ignorance of what has happened. You and your party of brave, loyal men did their work so well that no news could go forth. So long, therefore, as the naval Captain is ignorant, he must delay till the last. But if he saw me he would know that THAT branch of the venture had miscarried. He would gather from our being here that we had news of my father’s capture, and as he would know that the marauders would fail unless they were relieved by force, he would order the captive to be slain.”

“Yes, dear, to-morrow you had, perhaps, better see the Captain, but to-night we must try to rescue my father. Here I think I see a way. You have your aeroplane. Please take me with you into the Silent Tower.”

“Not for a world of chrysolite!” said I, horrified. She took my hand and held it tight whilst she went on:

“Dear, I know, I know! Be satisfied. But it is the only way. You can, I know, get there, and in the dark. But if you were to go in it, it would give warning to the enemies, and besides, my father would not understand. Remember, he does not know you; he has never seen you, and does not, I

suppose, even know as yet of your existence. But he would know me at once, and in any dress. You can manage to lower me into the Tower by a rope from the aeroplane. The Turks as yet do not know of our pursuit, and doubtless rely, at all events in part, on the strength and security of the Tower. Therefore their guard will be less active than it would at first or later on. I shall post father in all details, and we shall be ready quickly. Now, dear, let us think out the scheme together. Let your man's wit and experience help my ignorance, and we shall save my father!"

How could I have resisted such pleading—even had it not seemed wise? But wise it was; and I, who knew what the aeroplane could do under my own guidance, saw at once the practicalities of the scheme. Of course there was a dreadful risk in case anything should go wrong. But we are at present living in a world of risks—and her father's life was at stake. So I took my dear wife in my arms, and told her that my mind was hers for this, as my soul and body already were. And I cheered her by saying that I thought it might be done.

I sent for Rooke, and told him of the new adventure, and he quite agreed with me in the wisdom of it. I then told him that he would have to go and interview the Captain of the Turkish warship in the morning, if I did not turn up. "I am going to see the Vladika," I said. "He will lead our own troops in the attack on the Silent Tower. But it will rest with you to deal with the warship. Ask the Captain to whom or what nation the ship belongs. He is sure to refuse to tell. In such case mention to him that if he flies no nation's flag, his vessel is a pirate ship, and that you, who are in command of the navy of the Blue Mountains, will deal with him as a pirate is dealt with—no quarter, no mercy. He will temporize, and perhaps try a bluff; but when things get serious with him he will land a force, or try to, and may even prepare to shell the town. He will threaten to, at any rate. In such case deal with him as you think best, or as near to it as you can." He answered:

"I shall carry out your wishes with my life. It is a righteous task. Not that anything of that sort would ever stand in my way. If he attacks our nation, either as a Turk or a pirate, I shall wipe him out. We shall see what our own little packet can do. Moreover, any of the marauders who have entered the Blue Mountains, from sea or otherwise, shall never get out by sea! I take it that we of my contingent shall cover the attacking party. It will be a sorry time for us all if that happens without our seeing you and the Voivodin; for in such case we shall understand the worst!" Iron as he was, the man trembled.

"That is so, Rooke," I said. "We are taking a desperate chance, we know. But the case is desperate! But we all have our duty to do, whatever happens. Ours and yours is stern; but when we have done it, the result will be that life will be easier for others—for those that are left."

Before he left, I asked him to send up to me three suits of the Masterman bullet-proof clothes of which we had a supply on the yacht.

"Two are for the Voivodin and myself," I said; "the third is for the Voivode to put on. The Voivodin will take it with her when she descends from the aeroplane into the Tower."

Whilst any daylight was left I went out to survey the ground. My wife wanted to come with me, but I would not let her. "No," said I; "you will have at the best a fearful tax on your strength and your nerves. You will want to be as fresh as is possible when you get on the aeroplane." Like a good wife, she obeyed, and lay down to rest in the little tent provided for her.

I took with me a local man who knew the ground, and who was trusted to be silent. We made a long detour when we had got as near the Silent Tower as we could without being noticed. I made notes from my compass as to directions, and took good notice of anything that could possibly serve as a landmark. By the time we got home I was pretty well satisfied that if all should go

well I could easily sail over the Tower in the dark. Then I had a talk with my wife, and gave her full instructions:

“When we arrive over the Tower,” I said, “I shall lower you with a long rope. You will have a parcel of food and spirit for your father in case he is fatigued or faint; and, of course, the bullet-proof suit, which he must put on at once. You will also have a short rope with a belt at either end—one for your father, the other for you. When I turn the aeroplane and come back again, you will have ready the ring which lies midway between the belts. This you will catch into the hook at the end of the lowered rope. When all is secure, and I have pulled you both up by the windlass so as to clear the top, I shall throw out ballast which we shall carry on purpose, and away we go! I am sorry it must be so uncomfortable for you both, but there is no other way. When we get well clear of the Tower, I shall take you both up on the platform. If necessary, I shall descend to do it—and then we shall steer for Ilsin.”

“When all is safe, our men will attack the Tower. We must let them do it, for they expect it. A few men in the clothes and arms which we took from your captors will be pursued by some of ours. It is all arranged. They will ask the Turks to admit them, and if the latter have not learned of your father’s escape, perhaps they will do so. Once in, our men will try to open the gate. The chances are against them, poor fellows! but they are all volunteers, and will die fighting. If they win out, great glory will be theirs.”

“The moon does not rise to-night till just before midnight, so we have plenty of time. We shall start from here at ten. If all be well, I shall place you in the Tower with your father in less than a quarter-hour from that. A few minutes will suffice to clothe him in bullet-proof and get on his belt. I shall not be away from the Tower more than a very few minutes, and, please God, long before eleven we shall be safe. Then the Tower can be won in an attack by our mountaineers. Perhaps, when the guns are heard on the ship of war—for there is sure to be firing—the Captain may try to land a shore party. But Rooke will stand in the way, and if I know the man and The Lady, we shall not be troubled with many Turks to-night. By midnight you and your father can be on the way to Vissarion. I can interview the naval Captain in the morning.”

My wife’s marvellous courage and self-possession stood to her. At half an hour before the time fixed she was ready for our adventure. She had improved the scheme in one detail. She had put on her own belt and coiled the rope round her waist, so the only delay would be in bringing her father’s belt. She would keep the bullet-proof dress intended to be his strapped in a packet on her back, so that if occasion should be favourable he would not want to put it on till he and she should have reached the platform of the aeroplane. In such case, I should not steer away from the Tower at all, but would pass slowly across it and take up the captive and his brave daughter before leaving. I had learned from local sources that the Tower was in several stories. Entrance was by the foot, where the great iron-clad door was; then came living-rooms and storage, and an open space at the top. This would probably be thought the best place for the prisoner, for it was deep-sunk within the massive walls, wherein was no loophole of any kind. This, if it should so happen, would be the disposition of things best for our plan. The guards would at this time be all inside the Tower—probably resting, most of them—so that it was possible that no one might notice the coming of the airship. I was afraid to think that all might turn out so well, for in such case our task would be a simple enough one, and would in all human probability be crowned with success.

At ten o’clock we started. Teuta did not show the smallest sign of fear or even uneasiness, though this was the first time she had even seen an aeroplane at work. She proved to be an

admirable passenger for an airship. She stayed quite still, holding herself rigidly in the position arranged, by the cords which I had fixed for her.

When I had tried my course by the landmarks and with the compass lit by the Tiny my electric light in the dark box, I had time to look about me. All seemed quite dark wherever I looked—to land, or sea, or sky. But darkness is relative, and though each quarter and spot looked dark in turn, there was not such absolute darkness as a whole. I could tell the difference, for instance, between land and sea, no matter how far off we might be from either. Looking upward, the sky was dark; yet there was light enough to see, and even distinguish broad effects. I had no difficulty in distinguishing the Tower towards which we were moving, and that, after all, was the main thing. We drifted slowly, very slowly, as the air was still, and I only used the minimum pressure necessary for the engine. I think I now understood for the first time the extraordinary value of the engine with which my Kitson was equipped. It was noiseless, it was practically of no weight, and it allowed the machine to progress as easily as the old-fashioned balloon used to drift before a breeze. Teuta, who had naturally very fine sight, seemed to see even better than I did, for as we drew nearer to the Tower, and its round, open top began to articulate itself, she commenced to prepare for her part of the task. She it was who uncoiled the long drag-rope ready for her lowering. We were proceeding so gently that she as well as I had hopes that I might be able to actually balance the machine on the top of the curving wall—a thing manifestly impossible on a straight surface, though it might have been possible on an angle.

On we crept—on, and on! There was no sign of light about the Tower, and not the faintest sound to be heard till we were almost close to the line of the rising wall; then we heard a sound of something like mirth, but muffled by distance and thick walls. From it we took fresh heart, for it told us that our enemies were gathered in the lower chambers. If only the Voivode should be on the upper stage, all would be well.

Slowly, almost inch by inch, and with a suspense that was agonizing, we crossed some twenty or thirty feet above the top of the wall. I could see as we came near the jagged line of white patches where the heads of the massacred Turks placed there on spikes in old days seemed to give still their grim warning. Seeing that they made in themselves a difficulty of landing on the wall, I deflected the plane so that, as we crept over the wall, we might, if they became displaced, brush them to the outside of the wall. A few seconds more, and I was able to bring the machine to rest with the front of the platform jutting out beyond the Tower wall. Here I anchored her fore and aft with clamps which had been already prepared.

Whilst I was doing so Teuta had leaned over the inner edge of the platform, and whispered as softly as the sigh of a gentle breeze

“Hist! hist!” The answer came in a similar sound from some twenty feet below us, and we knew that the prisoner was alone. Forthwith, having fixed the hook of the rope in the ring to which was attached her belt, I lowered my wife. Her father evidently knew her whisper, and was ready. The hollow Tower—a smooth cylinder within—sent up the voices from it faint as were the whispers:

“Father, it is I—Teuta!”

“My child, my brave daughter!”

“Quick, father; strap the belt round you. See that it is secure. We have to be lifted into the air if necessary. Hold together. It will be easier for Rupert to lift us to the airship.”

“Rupert?”

“Yes; I shall explain later. Quick, quick! There is not a moment to lose. He is enormously strong, and can lift us together; but we must help him by being still, so he won’t have to use the

windlass, which might creak.” As she spoke she jerked slightly at the rope, which was our preconcerted signal that I was to lift. I was afraid the windlass might creak, and her thoughtful hint decided me. I bent my back to the task, and in a few seconds they were on the platform on which they, at Teuta’s suggestion, lay flat, one at each side of my seat, so as to keep the best balance possible.

I took off the clamps, lifted the bags of ballast to the top of the wall, so that there should be no sound of falling, and started the engine. The machine moved forward a few inches, so that it tilted towards the outside of the wall. I threw my weight on the front part of the platform, and we commenced our downward fall at a sharp angle. A second enlarged the angle, and without further ado we slid away into the darkness. Then, ascending as we went, when the engine began to work at its strength, we turned, and presently made straight for Ilsin.

The journey was short—not many minutes. It almost seemed as if no time whatever had elapsed till we saw below us the gleam of lights, and by them saw a great body of men gathered in military array. We slackened and descended. The crowd kept deathly silence, but when we were amongst them we needed no telling that it was not due to lack of heart or absence of joy. The pressure of their hands as they surrounded us, and the devotion with which they kissed the hands and feet of both the Voivode and his daughter, were evidence enough for me, even had I not had my own share of their grateful rejoicing.

In the midst of it all the low, stern voice of Rooke, who had burst a way to the front beside the Vladika, said:

“Now is the time to attack the Tower. Forward, brothers, but in silence. Let there not be a sound till you are near the gate; then play your little comedy of the escaping marauders. And ‘twill be no comedy for them in the Tower. The yacht is all ready for the morning, Mr. Sent Leger, in case I do not come out of the scrimmage if the bluejackets arrive. In such case you will have to handle her yourself. God keep you, my Lady; and you, too, Voivode! Forward!”

In a ghostly silence the grim little army moved forwards. Rooke and the men with him disappeared into the darkness in the direction of the harbour of Ilsin.

FROM THE SCRIPT OF THE VOIVODE, PETER VISSARION,

July 7, 1907.

I had little idea, when I started on my homeward journey, that it would have such a strange termination. Even I, who ever since my boyhood have lived in a whirl of adventure, intrigue, or diplomacy— whichever it may be called—statecraft, and war, had reason to be surprised. I certainly thought that when I locked myself into my room in the hotel at Ilsin that I would have at last a spell, however short, of quiet. All the time of my prolonged negotiations with the various nationalities I had to be at tension; so, too, on my homeward journey, lest something at the last moment should happen adversely to my mission. But when I was safe on my own Land of the Blue Mountains, and laid my head on my pillow, where only friends could be around me, I thought I might forget care.

But to wake with a rude hand over my mouth, and to feel myself grasped tight by so many hands that I could not move a limb, was a dreadful shock. All after that was like a dreadful dream. I was rolled in a great rug so tightly that I could hardly breathe, let alone cry out. Lifted by many hands through the window, which I could hear was softly opened and shut for the purpose, and carried to a boat. Again lifted into some sort of litter, on which I was borne a long distance, but with considerable rapidity. Again lifted out and dragged through a doorway opened on purpose—I could hear the clang as it was shut behind me. Then the rug was removed, and I

found myself, still in my night-gear, in the midst of a ring of men. There were two score of them, all Turks, all strong-looking, resolute men, armed to the teeth. My clothes, which had been taken from my room, were thrown down beside me, and I was told to dress. As the Turks were going from the room—shaped like a vault—where we then were, the last of them, who seemed to be some sort of officer, said:

“If you cry out or make any noise whatever whilst you are in this Tower, you shall die before your time!” Presently some food and water were brought me, and a couple of blankets. I wrapped myself up and slept till early in the morning. Breakfast was brought, and the same men filed in. In the presence of them all the same officer said:

“I have given instructions that if you make any noise or betray your presence to anyone outside this Tower, the nearest man is to restore you to immediate quiet with his yataghan. It you promise me that you will remain quiet whilst you are within the Tower, I can enlarge your liberties somewhat. Do you promise?” I promised as he wished; there was no need to make necessary any stricter measure of confinement. Any chance of escape lay in having the utmost freedom allowed to me. Although I had been taken away with such secrecy, I knew that before long there would be pursuit. So I waited with what patience I could. I was allowed to go on the upper platform—a consideration due, I am convinced, to my captors’ wish for their own comfort rather than for mine.

It was not very cheering, for during the daytime I had satisfied myself that it would be quite impossible for even a younger and more active man than I am to climb the walls. They were built for prison purposes, and a cat could not find entry for its claws between the stones. I resigned myself to my fate as well as I could. Wrapping my blanket round me, I lay down and looked up at the sky. I wished to see it whilst I could. I was just dropping to sleep—the unutterable silence of the place broken only now and again by some remark by my captors in the rooms below me—when there was a strange appearance just over me—an appearance so strange that I sat up, and gazed with distended eyes.

Across the top of the tower, some height above, drifted, slowly and silently, a great platform. Although the night was dark, it was so much darker where I was within the hollow of the Tower that I could actually see what was above me. I knew it was an aeroplane—one of which I had seen in Washington. A man was seated in the centre, steering; and beside him was a silent figure of a woman all wrapped in white. It made my heart beat to see her, for she was figured something like my Teuta, but broader, less shapely. She leaned over, and a whispered “Ssh!” crept down to me. I answered in similar way. Whereupon she rose, and the man lowered her down into the Tower. Then I saw that it was my dear daughter who had come in this wonderful way to save me. With infinite haste she helped me to fasten round my waist a belt attached to a rope, which was coiled round her; and then the man, who was a giant in strength as well as stature, raised us both to the platform of the aeroplane, which he set in motion without an instant’s delay.

Within a few seconds, and without any discovery being made of my escape, we were speeding towards the sea. The lights of Ilsin were in front of us. Before reaching the town, however, we descended in the midst of a little army of my own people, who were gathered ready to advance upon the Silent Tower, there to effect, if necessary, my rescue by force. Small chance would there have been of my life in case of such a struggle. Happily, however, the devotion and courage of my dear daughter and of her gallant companion prevented such a necessity. It was strange to me to find such joyous reception amongst my friends expressed in such a whispered

silence. There was no time for comment or understanding or the asking of questions—I was fain to take things as they stood, and wait for fuller explanation.

This came later, when my daughter and I were able to converse alone.

When the expedition went out against the Silent Tower, Teuta and I went to her tent, and with us came her gigantic companion, who seemed not wearied, but almost overcome with sleep. When we came into the tent, over which at a little distance a cordon of our mountaineers stood on guard, he said to me:

“May I ask you, sir, to pardon me for a time, and allow the Voivodin to explain matters to you? She will, I know, so far assist me, for there is so much work still to be done before we are free of the present peril. For myself, I am almost overcome with sleep. For three nights I have had no sleep, but all during that time much labour and more anxiety. I could hold on longer; but at daybreak I must go out to the Turkish warship that lies in the offing. She is a Turk, though she does not confess to it; and she it is who has brought hither the marauders who captured both your daughter and yourself. It is needful that I go, for I hold a personal authority from the National Council to take whatever step may be necessary for our protection. And when I go I should be clear-headed, for war may rest on that meeting. I shall be in the adjoining tent, and shall come at once if I am summoned, in case you wish for me before dawn.” Here my daughter struck in:

“Father, ask him to remain here. We shall not disturb him, I am sure, in our talking. And, moreover, if you knew how much I owe to him—to his own bravery and his strength—you would understand how much safer I feel when he is close to me, though we are surrounded by an army of our brave mountaineers.”

“But, my daughter,” I said, for I was as yet all in ignorance, “there are confidences between father and daughter which none other may share. Some of what has been I know, but I want to know all, and it might be better that no stranger—however valiant he may be, or no matter in what measure we are bound to him—should be present.” To my astonishment, she who had always been amenable to my lightest wish actually argued with me:

“Father, there are other confidences which have to be respected in like wise. Bear with me, dear, till I have told you all, and I am right sure that you will agree with me. I ask it, father.”

That settled the matter, and as I could see that the gallant gentleman who had rescued me was swaying on his feet as he waited respectfully, I said to him:

“Rest with us, sir. We shall watch over your sleep.”

Then I had to help him, for almost on the instant he sank down, and I had to guide him to the rugs spread on the ground. In a few seconds he was in a deep sleep. As I stood looking at him, till I had realized that he was really asleep, I could not help marvelling at the bounty of Nature that could uphold even such a man as this to the last moment of work to be done, and then allow so swift a collapse when all was over, and he could rest peacefully.

He was certainly a splendid fellow. I think I never saw so fine a man physically in my life. And if the lesson of his physiognomy be true, he is as sterling inwardly as his external is fair. “Now,” said I to Teuta, “we are to all intents quite alone. Tell me all that has been, so that I may understand.”

Whereupon my daughter, making me sit down, knelt beside me, and told me from end to end the most marvellous story I had ever heard or read of. Something of it I had already known from the Archbishop Paleologue’s later letters, but of all else I was ignorant. Far away in the great West beyond the Atlantic, and again on the fringe of the Eastern seas, I had been thrilled to my heart’s core by the heroic devotion and fortitude of my daughter in yielding herself for her country’s sake to that fearful ordeal of the Crypt; of the grief of the nation at her reported death,

news of which was so mercifully and wisely withheld from me as long as possible; of the supernatural rumours that took root so deep; but no word or hint had come to me of a man who had come across the orbit of her life, much less of all that has resulted from it. Neither had I known of her being carried off, or of the thrice gallant rescue of her by Rupert. Little wonder that I thought so highly of him even at the first moment I had a clear view of him when he sank down to sleep before me. Why, the man must be a marvel. Even our mountaineers could not match such endurance as his. In the course of her narrative my daughter told me of how, being wearied with her long waiting in the tomb, and waking to find herself alone when the floods were out, and even the Crypt submerged, she sought safety and warmth elsewhere; and how she came to the Castle in the night, and found the strange man alone. I said: "That was dangerous, daughter, if not wrong. The man, brave and devoted as he is, must answer me—your father." At that she was greatly upset, and before going on with her narrative, drew me close in her arms, and whispered to me:

"Be gentle to me, father, for I have had much to bear. And be good to him, for he holds my heart in his breast!" I reassured her with a gentle pressure—there was no need to speak. She then went on to tell me about her marriage, and how her husband, who had fallen into the belief that she was a Vampire, had determined to give even his soul for her; and how she had on the night of the marriage left him and gone back to the tomb to play to the end the grim comedy which she had undertaken to perform till my return; and how, on the second night after her marriage, as she was in the garden of the Castle—going, as she shyly told me, to see if all was well with her husband—she was seized secretly, muffled up, bound, and carried off. Here she made a pause and a digression. Evidently some fear lest her husband and myself should quarrel assailed her, for she said:

"Do understand, father, that Rupert's marriage to me was in all ways regular, and quite in accord with our customs. Before we were married I told the Archbishop of my wish. He, as your representative during your absence, consented himself, and brought the matter to the notice of the Vladika and the Archimandrites. All these concurred, having exacted from me—very properly, I think—a sacred promise to adhere to my self-appointed task. The marriage itself was orthodox in all ways—though so far unusual that it was held at night, and in darkness, save for the lights appointed by the ritual. As to that, the Archbishop himself, or the Archimandrite of Spazac, who assisted him, or the Vladika, who acted as Paranymp, will, all or any of them, give you full details. Your representative made all inquiries as to Rupert Sent Leger, who lived in Vissarion, though he did not know who I was, or from his point of view who I had been. But I must tell you of my rescue."

And so she went on to tell me of that unavailing journey south by her captors; of their bafflement by the cordon which Rupert had established at the first word of danger to "the daughter of our leader," though he little knew who the "leader" was, or who was his "daughter"; of how the brutal marauders tortured her to speed with their daggers; and how her wounds left blood-marks on the ground as she passed along; then of the halt in the valley, when the marauders came to know that their road north was menaced, if not already blocked; of the choosing of the murderers, and their keeping ward over her whilst their companions went to survey the situation; and of her gallant rescue by that noble fellow, her husband—my son I shall call him henceforth, and thank God that I may have that happiness and that honour!

Then my daughter went on to tell me of the race back to Vissarion, when Rupert went ahead of all—as a leader should do; of the summoning of the Archbishop and the National Council; and of

their placing the nation's handjar in Rupert's hand; of the journey to Ilsin, and the flight of my daughter—and my son—on the aeroplane.

The rest I knew.

As she finished, the sleeping man stirred and woke—broad awake in a second—sure sign of a man accustomed to campaign and adventure. At a glance he recalled everything that had been, and sprang to his feet. He stood respectfully before me for a few seconds before speaking. Then he said, with an open, engaging smile:

“I see, sir, you know all. Am I forgiven—for Teuta's sake as well as my own?” By this time I was also on my feet. A man like that walks straight into my heart. My daughter, too, had risen, and stood by my side. I put out my hand and grasped his, which seemed to leap to meet me—as only the hand of a swordsman can do.

“I am glad you are my son!” I said. It was all I could say, and I meant it and all it implied. We shook hands warmly. Teuta was pleased; she kissed me, and then stood holding my arm with one hand, whilst she linked her other hand in the arm of her husband.

He summoned one of the sentries without, and told him to ask Captain Rooke to come to him. The latter had been ready for a call, and came at once. When through the open flap of the tent we saw him coming, Rupert—as I must call him now, because Teuta wishes it; and I like to do it myself—said:

“I must be off to board the Turkish vessel before it comes inshore. Good-bye, sir, in case we do not meet again.” He said the last few words in so low a voice that I only could hear them. Then he kissed his wife, and told her he expected to be back in time for breakfast, and was gone. He met Rooke—I am hardly accustomed to call him Captain as yet, though, indeed, he well deserves it—at the edge of the cordon of sentries, and they went quickly together towards the port, where the yacht was lying with steam up.